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ABSTRACT

The Success Project was initiated by the San Diego Community College District in 1985 to improve remedial instruction and support services, increase faculty participation in instructional decision making, and provide a means for following up on decisions. In the first year, task forces on instructional assessment, student assessment, remediation, advisement, and retention and transfer were formed. During the second year, programs and systems designed by the task forces were implemented, including an assessment and placement system, an honors program, and a revised sequence of courses in basic math and English. In the third year, three new task forces were created to examine faculty development, minority transfer, and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) issues. The primary outcomes of the Success Project include the following: (1) the assessment and placement system was redesigned and now includes a coherent method of moving students from developmental to college-level courses, new placement tests, computer-generated reports on test scores and student information, and an ability to check prerequisites; (2) course sequences and curricula in basic math, English, and ESL were redesigned; (3) procedures for referral to and enrollment in continuing education courses in basic skills were streamlined; (4) educational technicians were assigned to developmental courses; (5) a Transfer Admission Guarantee program with the University of California at San Diego was developed; and (6) faculty development activities concerning critical thinking instruction were carried out. In addition to specific accomplishments, the project made positive contributions to the overall climate and self-image of the district. (AYC)

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SUCCESS PROJECT FINAL REPORT

Board of Trustees

San Diego Community College District

June 8, 1988

JC 890 147

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APPROVED
BOARD MEETING 6-8-88

No. 460.1
ACTION

Subject: SUCCESS PROJECT FINAL REPORT **Date:** June 8, 1988

A. NAME OF DOCKET

Docket Office
584-6962

Acceptance of the final report of The Success Project.

B. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

1. Background and Purpose:

The Success Project (San Diego Community Colleges Educational Support System) came into existence in the fall of 1985 after almost a year of planning. The project has now completed its projected three-year tenure.

The project was an outgrowth of the Joint Competency Task Force, a group that had been formed to consider issues dealing with remedial education and placement testing. At the Board's direction, the task force supervised the transfer of courses in reading, spelling, vocabulary, and basic math from the colleges to Continuing Education and investigated a variety of placement tests and testing systems. However, it became apparent that as the task force was constituted, the membership was insufficiently representative to accomplish a comprehensive review of the issues. The task force requested permission from the Trustees to disband and design a more suitable working group. The Success Project was the result.

The overall intent of the project was to bring about improvements in instruction and support services for students. Other goals included increased participation by faculty in instructional decision-making, ending fragmentation in decision-making, and providing a means for continuous follow-up on decisions.

The project has been headed by a coordinating council whose members are Jeanne Atherton, Dorothy Berger, Larry Brown, John Clancy, Mary Dohrman, Gwyn Enright, Kit Foster, Dennis Howard, John Markley, Lynn Neault, Carol Patrick, Dick Rossmaessler, and Judy Stamm. It is not an exaggeration to state that this group has worked for three years in unprecedented harmony and cohesion.

The character of each of the three years was quite different. In the first year, five task forces were formed: Instructional Assessment, Student Assessment, Remediation, Advisement, and Retention and Transfer (the last two of which were merged because of the transfer of one chair). This was the year of widest involvement and greatest activity.

Recommended: _____

Approved for Consideration: Garland P Peed
Garland P. Peed, Chancellor

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B. STATEMENT OF ISSUE/PURPOSE (continued)

1. Background and Purpose: (continued)

The second year was primarily a year of nuts and bolts implementation, in which the Assessment and Placement System designed in the first year was put into operation, as were the Honors Program, which grew out of the first year's activity, and the revised sequences of courses in basic math and English. In the third year, three new task forces were formed: Faculty Development, Minority Transfer, and Issues for Non-native Speakers of English. Critical thinking and Writing Across the Curriculum were also major focuses of attention.

2. Status:

Primary Outcomes

a. The Assessment and Placement System was redesigned and now includes the following:

(1) A coherent method of moving students through any needed developmental programs into college-level courses;
(2) New placement tests;
(3) Computer-generated reports on test outcomes and background information on students; and
(4) The ability to check satisfaction of prerequisite scores prior to enrollment.

b. Course sequences and curricula in basic math and English and college-level ESL were redesigned.

c. Procedures for referral to and enrollment in Continuing Education's College prep Math and English courses were streamlined.

d. Educational Technicians were assigned to developmental courses to increase student learning and retention.

e. The Honors Program was developed and implemented.

f. The TAG Program (Transfer Admission Guarantee) with UCSD was developed and implemented.

g. A district-wide faculty development program was proposed.

h. A minority transfer program was proposed.

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B. STATEMENT OF ISSUE/PURPOSE (continued)

2. Status: (continued)

Primary Outcomes (continued)

i. Focus on critical thinking was increased via the following:

(1) A general, introductory lecture;
(2) A two-semester, six-part seminar taught by Dennis Rohatyn, from USD's philosophy department, who has made himself available to assist individual faculty members in incorporating critical thinking into specific courses;
(3) A detailed newsletter with follow-up articles available to faculty;
(4) Acquisition of videotapes on critical thinking applied to various disciplines;
(5) Attendance by a group of faculty at the major critical thinking conference this summer.

j. A commitment to Writing Across the Curriculum was made via the following:

(1) A faculty survey to determine level of interest;
(2) The design of a campus-based WAC program that the chair councils and senates are implementing;
(3) A detailed newsletter with follow-up articles available;
(4) A half-day workshop presented by UCLA's Center for Academic Interinstitutional Programs.

k. Orientation programs for new students were reviewed and modified.

l. Recommendations concerning orientation, faculty advising, and educational program planning were incorporated into the "Proposed System for Student Retention" that was presented to the Board in October 1986.

m. The project sponsored major speakers on community college issues including the following:

John Roueche, University of Texas;
Robert McCabe, President of Miami-Dade College;
Patricia Cross, Harvard;
Robert Gordon, President of Humber College, Ontario, Canada; and
Arthur Cohen, UCLA.

B. STATEMENT OF ISSUE/PURPOSE (continued)

2. Status: (continued)

Primary Outcomes (continued)

n. Individual task forces were addressed by other speakers--specialists in tests, testing, reading, etc.

o. Task forces members traveled to a variety of other community colleges to examine practices and systems that might be implemented here; senate presidents attended the NISOD Conference each year.

p. A variety of surveys and papers (reading, grading practices, placement testing, issues for non-native speakers) was produced and circulated; results were incorporated into the assessment system and curricular revisions.

q. Newsletters were published which reported on project activities and served as the vehicle of dissemination of a wide variety of handouts on instruction-related matters.

Secondary Outcomes

In addition to the above specific accomplishments, The Success Project has made some positive contributions to the general climate of the district.

The words "change" and "cooperation" best summarize what The Success Project has accomplished. The faculty has proved itself capable of large-scale, reasoned, and methodical investigation and planning for improvements in assessment and instruction. The fact that the Board has supported the project and approved its recommendations for implementation has had a beneficial effect on faculty-Board relationships. Confidence has been increased.

The most widely held perception is that The Success Project has brought people together. Faculty and staff from the various campuses and centers have worked together over an extended period of time, learned together, gotten to know and appreciate one another to an extent that may never have occurred before. For many people (but not all), this has provided graphic evidence that cooperation and autonomy are not mutually exclusive.

B. STATEMENT OF ISSUE/PURPOSE (continued)

2. Status: (continued)

Other Observations and Recommendations

Looking back over the three-year history of the project, one can see a series of stages in the development of group process. Some conclusions can be drawn from this history that may be useful to future projects and that may contribute to a better understanding of relationships and attitudes in the District.

The project began with a perplexing mix of enthusiasm, cynicism, and disbelief. When the first call went out for volunteers to staff the five initial task forces, the response was quite large, with more than 90 people agreeing to serve. However, the project almost foundered during the first meetings when many of the participants vehemently proclaimed that The Success Project was a waste of time as the Board and the administration would neither accept nor fund the recommendations that were projected. There was a widespread feeling that, in the past, faculty had devoted considerable time and energy to making proposals that were then shelved indefinitely. Some who held this position did not participate beyond the first meetings; other persisted.

Then the task forces began their work in earnest, and considerable fear and anxiety came into evidence, although not particularly overtly. Faculty began to appreciate the enormity of the tasks at hand and how much had to be learned, for example about the statistical evaluation of placement tests. As people began to believe that the assessment and remediation programs they were designing would actually be implemented, the responsibility began to weigh heavy, for thousands of students would be affected by the rightness or wrongness of the decisions being made. There is a small, but perhaps not surprising, irony here: although cynicism is a counterproductive attitude, it is often more comfortable and less threatening than actively working for change.

Anxiety, however, quickly gave way in the face of hard work and widespread acceptance of the project's recommendations. The next observable phase might be termed reverse scapegoating in that the project was given credit for accomplishing more than what had, in fact, been accomplished. We received a variety of comments and inquiries about new programs or services that had actually been the work of other groups in the District. We also learned with some concern that various other proposals were being met with the response that The Success Project was already taking care of the matter, when that was not the case. There is nothing particularly surprising about this response, but it is evidence of how potent image and self-image can be, irrespective of the truth or accuracy of those images.

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B. STATEMENT OF ISSUE/PURPOSE (continued)

2. Status: (continued)

Other Observations and Recommendations

In the last few years, through the work of several groups in addition to The Success Project, the District has made considerable progress in changing its self-image, in reducing negativism and cynicism, in increasing the belief that we can make change for the better happen. It is incumbent on us, then, to be watchful and to take steps to ensure that that positive image is preserved. With that in mind, we offer some recommendations:

(1) Since one of the most positive aspects of The Success Project has been the bringing together of people from across the District to study and plan for change, District administration might consider calling together each year one or two broadly constituted task forces to consider specific issues of major importance and to make recommendations for change. The issues might be chosen in conjunction with the faculty senates.

A task force on critical thinking is a possibility. Although course descriptions have been modified to include the critical thinking aspects mandated by Title 5, considerable work still remains to be done regarding actual implementation.

(2) Another popular aspect of the project has been the newsletter dealing with instruction-related issues and serving as a vehicle for dissemination of relevant scholarly articles (via coupons for requesting further information). The administration might consider the possibility of creating a new districtwide publication (like The Communicator and WE) to serve as a forum for instructional matters.

(3) The Success Project received unfailing support from the Office of Research and Planning but was sometimes hampered by lack of longitudinal data. Proper evaluation of the Assessment and Placement System and the re-designed remedial programs is vital. Detailed validation, refinement, and development of those programs will be impossible without expanded research capabilities. We urge the Board to support a greater research capability for the District.

(4) Various recommendations about recruitment, retention, transfer, and orientation have been made but not fully implemented. Many of these recommendations are now included in the colleges' matriculation plans. We urge continued Board interest in and support for these matters.

C. **PROPOSAL**

The Board of Trustees hereby accepts the final report of The Success Project.

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